

Unit 1: Major Messianic Prophecies

Lesson 1 | December 1, 2024 Jesus' Ancestry and Priesthood

Study Text

Genesis 3:1–15; 12:1–3; 14:1–20; Psalm 110:1–4; Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 2:1–14;
Hebrews 7:1–28

Central Truth

Jesus' prophesied ancestry and priesthood highlight the power and faithfulness of God.

Key Verse: Hebrews 7:17

Thou [Jesus] art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (KJV).

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will examine the nature of sin that brought about the Fall.
- Students will rejoice in God's plan of salvation.
- Students will explore Jesus' role as Great High Priest.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: We're starting a new series of lessons today about some of the major Old Testament prophecies that looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. As we'll see over the next eight weeks, God inspired many prophetic messages about Jesus and the salvation He would bring—and every single one of them was fulfilled. Today, we're going all the way back to Genesis 3 to look at the very first clue that a Savior was coming to save us from sin and the punishment it requires.

Discussion Starter—Consequences

Say: Tell us about a time you got in trouble as a kid. What rule did you break? What was the punishment?

Say: One reason godly parents correct their kids is so they can learn from their mistakes and live healthy and successful lives. Without discipline, kids often don't learn lessons, and might make far worse decisions later in life.

Adam and Eve's disobedience in Genesis 3:1–7 had dramatic consequences that continue to affect us today. Today's lesson answers a couple of important questions: Why do we need a Savior? And why did Jesus need to come? After laying this foundation, we will be better equipped to understand the many prophecies covered in the lessons that follow.

Part 1—The Seed of the Woman The Origin of Sin

Genesis 3:1–15

Say: Genesis teaches that God made men and women in His own image (1:26), while all the other creatures were made according to their own kind (verse 24). Because people bear God’s image, we can uniquely relate to Him and even spend eternity with Him. We can also choose whether we’ll follow or reject His commands.

Genesis 3 records the Fall, revealing the nature of human sinfulness and our need for a Savior:

1. *The nature of the tempter.* In this account, the adversary—known later as Satan (Revelation 12:9)—took the form of a serpent, a common symbol of evil in the ancient world. He was crafty and cunning, able to distort the truth and deceive Eve.
2. *The nature of temptation.* The serpent undermined Eve’s confidence in God by questioning His intentions. Was God telling the truth? Could God be trusted? Ignoring everything else God had provided in the Garden, the enemy focused Eve’s attention on the one thing He had prohibited.
3. *The nature of sin.* Eve was not only attracted to the fruit because it looked delicious, but because she believed it would make her wise (Genesis 3:6). She and Adam wanted the kind of knowledge that would make them like God. As distrust crept into their hearts, they disobeyed God out of a prideful desire for autonomy and self-fulfillment. But they immediately discovered that such knowledge brought shame instead (verse 7). When they realized they were naked, they felt humiliated and defenseless for the first time. The shock of their own guilt caused them to cover themselves with fig leaves and hide from God. Their relationship with God and each other had been damaged.
4. *The nature of judgment.* When God confronted Adam and Eve with their disobedience (verses 9–13), they had nowhere to hide. The days of walking freely with God in the Garden had ended. For the first time, they experienced the separation from God that sin always brings. Before explaining the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin, God declared judgment on the serpent, which would crawl in the dust from then on (verse 14). More importantly, God said He would “cause hostility between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (verse 15). Here amid the horrible events of the Fall, God revealed the first hints of His grace, which would continue to unfold through history and the pages of Scripture. There would be ongoing enmity between Satan and people. But one day, God would restore the relationship between himself and the ones who bore His image. One of the woman’s descendants would sustain a temporary wound while permanently crushing the enemy.

Resource Packet Item 1: Consequences of the Fall

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, death entered the world, just as God had said would happen (Genesis 2:16–17). Students will discover some of the other consequences of the Fall as described in Scripture and reflect on how these passages help us to better understand ourselves and other people.

Discuss

? How is the serpent’s temptation of Eve similar to the way people are tempted to sin today?

? Read James 1:12–15. In what ways does sin lead to death?

The Remedy for Sin

Luke 2:1–14

Say: Genesis 3 describes sin’s consequences—the most important being separation from God. The chapter also drops clues that one of Eve’s offspring will eventually reverse this outcome. Looking back from our privileged perspective, we can see that promise’s fulfillment in Luke 2.

In Luke 1:67–79, the priest Zechariah prophesied, under the power of the Holy Spirit, about the Savior who would reverse the effects of the Fall. Jesus, the “mighty Savior” who was “promised through his holy prophets long ago” (verses 69–70), would rescue God’s people from their enemies so they could “serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness” (verses 74–75). There would be “salvation through forgiveness of their sins” (verse 77). The age-old bondage of sin would be broken. No more shame. No more separation.

We do well to read the Christmas story in Luke 2 with this fulfillment in mind. Born to Mary, Jesus was the promised descendant of Eve who would sustain a temporary wound before ultimately crushing Satan on our behalf. An angel announced Jesus’ birth to nearby shepherds, declaring Him to be the “Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord” (verse 11), titles that pointed to other promises of God that Jesus would fulfill. The significance of His birth became even more clear as an angel was joined by “the armies of heaven” (Luke 2:13) to proclaim, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased” (verse 14). The events of that night offered peace to humanity, opening the door to reconciliation with God. Through Jesus, the effects of the Fall could be reversed.

Discuss

? How did Jesus reverse the effects of the Fall?

? How has your life changed because you have peace with God?

Part 2—Descendant of Abraham

The Promise of Blessing

Genesis 12:1–3

Say: In Genesis 12:1–3, the narrative of Scripture sharpens to focus on a single man, Abraham, through whom God’s promise would be fulfilled. The remainder of the Old Testament focuses on God’s covenant to bless the whole world through Abraham’s descendants.

Abraham (who was at that time called Abram) lived in the Mesopotamian city of Ur (modern-day Iraq). In this region, like most at that time, people worshipped many gods. But God called Abraham to live in a new land and to worship Him alone.

God’s prophetic promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 included three key concepts that will emerge repeatedly as we study messianic prophecies over the next several weeks.

1. *The seed.* God promised to make Abraham “into a great nation” (verse 2), which means a group of people living in a specific place and observing a common religion—that is, the nation of Israel. However, the promise expanded in 17:5–6 to say that Abraham “will be the father of many nations,” referring to all the nations and people groups that follow in his faith.
2. *The land.* This promise referred to God’s provision, protection, blessing, and presence. It was the place where His people would live out their covenant relationship with Him as He dwelt among them in His temple. We see the focus change in the New Testament from physical land to God’s ongoing presence within all His people. The Church is His temple through the Holy Spirit’s presence (Ephesians 2:19–22).
3. *The blessing.* Abraham would carry the blessing of the one true God to “all the families on earth” (Genesis 12:3). Abraham’s name—which in ancient times referred to someone’s character and status—would be great. The world would look at his family and know that God was with them. And those who affirmed God’s blessing on Abraham would be blessed, while those who opposed Abraham would be cursed. This promise carried military and political implications for nations that were friendly or unfriendly to Israel, but we can also look at it spiritually. Those who reject the worship of many gods to embrace the one true God will be blessed through the saving work of Jesus, while those who reject God will find judgment. That blessing would then continue spiritually through the lives of those who put their faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:8–9, 14).

Resource Packet Item 2: Abraham’s Blessing Today

In Galatians 3:6–16, Paul explained the New Testament perspective on God’s promise in Genesis 12:1–3. Students will read the passage and discuss the lasting significance of God’s covenant with Abraham.

Discuss

? What is the importance of each part of God’s promise to Abraham?

? What are some of the ways the world has been blessed through Abraham?

The Blessing Fulfilled

Matthew 1:1–17

Say: We often skim over genealogies when we're reading Scripture. But the fact there are so many of them in both the Old and New Testaments should be a signal to us that they are important to the overall message of the Bible.

Resource Packet Item 3: Jesus' Genealogy in Matthew

Matthew 1:1–17 names Jesus' ancestors in three fourteen-generation groups. This informational handout includes mothers' names and biblical references for each ancestor (when available).

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus is important for several reasons:

1. It locates Jesus within Israel's history, connecting Him to Abraham and the patriarchs who received God's covenant promise.
2. It establishes Jesus as a descendant of David and the rightful heir to his throne as King.
3. It organizes the generations into three groups of fourteen names, indicating that the time of preparation and waiting for the Messiah was complete.

Matthew's genealogy summarizes salvation history, reminding us of all God has done to bring about His promise of redemption. The Messiah's family tree includes heroes like Abraham, Ruth, David, and Josiah, but it also includes villains like Athaliah (*Ath-uh-LIGH-uh*) and Manasseh (*Muh-NASS-uh*). God used all kinds of people and historical events to bring about the birth of His Son at His chosen time and place. He is sovereign over every facet of our lives too. Regardless of your circumstances, you can be "certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns" (Philippians 1:6).

Discuss

? What names do you recognize from Jesus' genealogy?

? Why might it be significant that these people are the Messiah's ancestors?

Part 3—In the Order of Melchizedek

What Kind of Priest Is This?

Genesis 14:17–20; Psalm 110:4

Say: Genesis 14 introduces us to Melchizedek (*Mel-KIZ-uh-dek*), one of the most unique figures in the Old Testament. This mysterious king and priest foreshadowed the priestly status of the Promised One who would one day crush the serpent's head and reverse the curse of sin.

Abraham's nephew Lot had been caught up in a regional war and was captured by the king of Elam and others. After rescuing his kinsmen, Abraham was approached by

Melchizedek, described as “the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High” (Genesis 14:18). *God Most High* in Hebrew is “El-Elyon.” *Melchizedek* means “king of righteousness.” *Salem* (likely referring to the city that would become Jerusalem) means “peace.”

Melchizedek generously provided wine and bread for Abraham (verse 18). Then he blessed Abraham in the name of El-Elyon (verses 19–20). The one true God—“Creator of heaven and earth”—had defeated Abraham’s enemies and proven himself superior to the many false gods of the Canaanites. Recognizing God’s provision and blessing, Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe, or “a tenth of all the goods he had recovered” (verse 20). In this way, Abraham likely demonstrated his trust in the validity of Melchizedek as a priest representing his God.

The only other mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament is found in Psalm 110. This prophetic psalm of David explains how the Messiah will reign as King in Jerusalem and beyond, and in verse 4, God himself makes a vow that He will be “a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” This parallel between Jesus and Melchizedek is clarified further in Hebrews 7.

Discuss

? What parallels do you see between Jesus and Melchizedek based on these Old Testament passages?

? Why do you think so little biographical information is recorded about Melchizedek, compared with other kings in the Old Testament?

The Great High Priest

Hebrews 7:11–28

Say: Hebrews 7:4 tells us to “consider then how great this Melchizedek was.” Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils of battle, just as would later be given to the Levitical priests. And Melchizedek blessed Abraham, “the one who had already received the promises of God. And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed” (verses 6–7).

The author’s goal in Hebrews 7 is to make the point that Jesus, as “priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (verse 17), is the “perfect High Priest forever” (verse 28). To that end, verses 1–10 explain the reasons why the priesthood of Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priesthood—and by association, the Law of Moses: In verse 11, the focus shifts to Jesus as the author uses the example of Melchizedek to describe the superiority of our Great High Priest.

1. *Like Melchizedek, Jesus’ priesthood is eternal.* He alone “is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf” (verse 25).

2. *Like Melchizedek, Jesus' priesthood is not based on His lineage.* He was part of the tribe of Judah and became a priest, not because of His genealogy, but “by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed” (verse 16). Levitical priesthood could not achieve “the perfection God intended” (verse 11). In other words, “the law never made anything perfect” (verse 19) and it was not enough to restore what had been lost in the Fall. So through Jesus, God established “a different priesthood, with a priest in the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Levi and Aaron” (verse 11).

3. *Like Melchizedek, Jesus has the power to bless.* His perfect righteousness meant His one-time sacrifice was enough to cover all sin for all time (verse 27). Melchizedek blessed Abraham, but as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, Jesus would bless the entire world (Genesis 12:3; Romans 5:18–19).

Resource Packet Item 4: Melchizedek and Jesus

Melchizedek was a “type” of Christ, which means he was an Old Testament figure who symbolized and foreshadowed the New Testament revelation of Jesus as Messiah. Students will consider the parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus and discuss other Old Testament types of Christ.

Discuss

? What makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be our perfect High Priest?

? Read 1 Timothy 2:5 and Romans 8:34. How could an understanding of Jesus' role as Mediator affect a believer's prayer life?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Jesus alone could counteract the curse of sin. He alone is the promised Victor who crushed the enemy, the promised King who ushered in peace, and the promised Priest who became our once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin. God has proven himself faithful and powerful to keep His promises. May we never allow our trust in Him to waver as we have put our faith in Jesus, who is able “to save those who come to God” (Hebrews 7:25).

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Pray that God would renew the joy of your salvation and help you pass that joy along to others.
- Studying messianic prophecies and their fulfillment reminds us of God's power and faithfulness. Tell a friend or family member about the ways God has been faithful to you, and invite them to come to class with you next week.
- In the weeks leading up to Christmas, consider how your class could reach out to vulnerable people in your community with the love of Jesus.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Our Faithful God.

Deuteronomy 7:7–9

Tuesday:

Great Is Thy Faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:19–24

Wednesday:

Rely on God's Faithfulness.

Psalm 86:11–17

Thursday:

Faithless or Faithful?

2 Thessalonians 2:1–5

Friday:

He Remains Faithful.

2 Timothy 2:8–13

Saturday:

Faithful to Forgive.

1 John 1:5–10